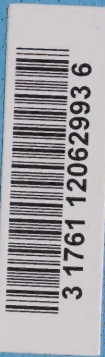


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SUBMISSION
to
ROYAL COMMISSION on COAL

by

The Nova Scotia Federation of Labour

March 16th. 1960

Submission to the Royal Commission on Coal
by the Nova Scotia Federation of Labour

Honorable Commissioner,

We have, sir, the privilege of appearing here on behalf of the Nova Scotia Federation of Labour, affiliated with the Canadian Labour Congress. Our Federation is a group which represents the many thousands of working people in the Province of Nova Scotia who are part of those organizations which form the Canadian Labour Congress.

We would extend to the Government of Canada our appreciation for the appointment of an Inquiry into the Coal Industry in this section of Canada, and we would extend this appreciation further so that it would include those who have accepted responsibility in carrying out the extremely important work of conducting the Inquiry. We believe the setting up of the Inquiry and the broad terms of reference will not fail to produce recommendations which will serve not only the interests of those connected with the industry or employed in it, but the interests of our people as a whole.

Because of our close association with the United Mine Workers of America over the years, we have felt deep and increasing concern for the problem confronting that organization and its membership in matters with which it has had to deal. This concern has been motivated not only by human consideration for the problems of families connected directly with the industry, but also because of more material reasons affecting our membership, both as working people and as citizens of this province.

As you are no doubt aware, the very existence of a number of long and well established Nova Scotia Communities, depends upon the continuation of coal mine operations. Coal mining, has long been the primary industry of this province. Coal and Steel have been the props upon which all other Industrial Activity is based. Any matters which effect to a major extent, the coal industry, or localized section of it, must also effect either the province as a whole, or large areas of the Province. Because many of our industries are effected by both the provincial economy and the economy of certain areas, it is not

necessary for us to elaborate further that the problems of the coal mining industry are the problems of the Province of Nova Scotia, and the problems of the mineworkers are the problems of all working people in the Province of Nova Scotia. We have followed with great interest the many suggestions made on behalf of the workers concerned in this industry by the organization representing them, and we have and do concur in these suggestions.

Representatives of our organizations who have been present at conferences on the condition of the coal industry in recent years have constantly proclaimed that it would be wrong to regard marketing and production difficulties as merely political, economic, or industrial problems. They have said the major consideration to be kept in mind when considering the plight of the coal industry is that this is, more than anything else, a social problem of great magnitude, dealing as it does with the welfare of thousands of people in long established communities. They have gone so far as to say that no future can be considered for the Province of Nova Scotia for generations to come which does not include stabilizing the coal industry at the highest figure of employment attainable.

In connection with this, we would submit that the social problems should first be recognized as a need which has to be met as a national obligation to the people of this Province generally and to the individual families so deeply concerned. We would respectfully submit that our obligations as people and as citizens transcend all other considerations.

If this should be recognized by the Inquiry, then this need should serve as the first objective of the Inquiry, and all other recommendations would be so shaped as to serve the reaching of this objective. If this is done, and the problems recognized in the light of their true importance to us as human beings and as people of Canada, the Inquiry would be the first step in lightening the great burden of worry and feelings of insecurity which have weighed so heavily on the minds of our people for much too long a time.

Statistics available following the closure of Springhill's #4 colliery, reveal that the vast majority of those displaced, being married and supporting families, as well as being home owners, placed them at a great disadvantage in securing new employment. Because of age and other factors, they were not generally subject to alternative employment or relocation. Suffice to say that the analogy of the Springhill situation would be magnified ten fold, if the declaration of the Dominion Coal Company to close three mines in Cape Breton area were to become a reality. We respectfully submit that human values must be the prime consideration.

Notes

In the general field then, our Federation would endorse the submission of the United Mine Workers and suggest that we are dealing primarily with a social problem in which measures of relief should not be restricted by dollars and cents considerations. If dollars and cents considerations are to be set aside in the first years of reconstruction, and if reconstruction is achieved, then even the initial financial investment, no matter how great, will have been proved to be both sound and modest when measured against the improved eventual position of our province and its people.

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We believe, however, that there are a number of minor or related points within the jurisdiction of the Inquiry on which suggestions by us might be made. We do this both because of general concern and because of requests from two small groups of mineworkers affiliated with our organization. As you will no doubt appreciate, while the problems of the industry are generally the same, there are some differences as to how these problems specifically affect small independent operations rather than the largest operator.

Some time ago, it was suggested to the Government of Nova Scotia that there should be set up a Provincial Coal Marketing Board, with representation from labour, management, and the Government. It was thought that such a Board, acting in conjunction with both the Department of Mines and the Department of Trade and Industry, could serve a constructive purpose, with proper technical, promotional, and sales assistance being provided it. Old markets could be retained, and supplied with a possibility of increased economy in some cases. New uses and new or expanded markets for coal production both locally


and interprovincially might be found.

This suggestion later received the official support of both District 26th. of the United Mine Workers of America and our Federation. We are hopeful that this Inquiry will exercise some influence on having the suggestions translated into a reality.

We would specifically like to draw your attention to the grave and economic problems confronting one of the province's most distressed areas, that of Pictou County, because of a decline in the coal industry. This problem has been consistently and continuously represented to all levels of government. As yet, we do not believe that any remedial action of any great consequence has been taken, or is being contemplated.

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For many years, Pictou County was one of the major coal producing areas of Nova Scotia. Coal was discovered in Pictou County in 1798 by the Rev. Mr. MacGregor, although the presence of coal in the county may have been known before that time. During the early half of the next century, very large operations at many mines were carried on by the General Mining Association. Later, other corporations carried on extensive activities, and smaller groups were also active. Over the years, coal has been the foundation for the diversified industrial activity which resulted in the Pictou area, and it would seem to follow logically that the recent decline in economic and industrial activity is closely connected with the decline in the coal industry there.

As in many other coal producing areas, Pictou was particularly susceptible to economic ups and downs. However, from 1949 onwards, there was a marked and disastrous rate of steady increase in the decline. From employment slightly in excess of two thousand in the coal industry in 1949-1951, we have reached a stage at which approximately five hundred are now employed, and even this employment is spasmodic and uncertain. The major source of this employment is provided by the Bosco Mine at Thorburn. There are two small independent operations, one at Greenwood, the other at Westville.



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It can be readily appreciated that a decrease representing a seventy-five per cent loss of employment in the major industry has presented grave and almost insurmountable problems to family and community welfare. We believe that any recommendations made to reconstitute the coal industry in Nova Scotia must contain provisions which will expand that industry in the Pictou County area.

A considerable amount of information on the various coal measures which go to make up the Stellarton Series underlying the Pictou area is available, but there is no co-ordinated and extensive single block of information dealing with the whole subject. Because of this, too often speculation and conjectures have played a prominent part in discussions on the matter.

It is our belief that on the physical side of the question extensive exploration and compilation of information on exploration matters should be undertaken, in order that we should know the true worth and extent of this natural resource. We feel that apart from further exploration, valuable information can be gained from provincial and company archives, and that this information should be connected with future exploration work.

A great bulk of information is presently available from a number of sources. Among these are annual Department of Mines Reports, the Vissac Report, the Bell Geological Survey Reports, the Carroll Commission Report, books by the late Mr. Robert Drummond of the Mining Historical Society, and many other documents. We believe that all of this information should be consolidated and supported by further physical knowledge produced by further exploration or consolidation.

From present information, it would seem that many possibilities of further coal mining activity as a contribution to the social and economic life of the area have not been considered with sufficient seriousness. Some of the available seams are virgin or near virgin seams. Others are seams which have been worked in some sectors to a considerable extent, but which have a proven residue of extractable tonnage running into millions of tons.

There are presently a number of opportunities of bringing into operation any one or a number of medium sized mines. The extremity of the so called Three Fifty section of the Foord Seam is fairly close to the surface, and a large deposit of several millions of tons might be extracted by an opening here. Coal has been mined from the Merigomish Road Seam, and there are a number of other seams whose outcrops have been exposed and where further development might be proven feasible after a limited investigation.

The Westville Main Seam is a very large deposit of high quality coal of a domestic and metallurgical type, and could provide the base of an extensive operation employing some hundreds of miners. If means of entrance other than that recommended by the Vissac Report were to be employed, however, the initial capital expenditures required would be high. These would be within the means of only a very large and experienced company or by virtue of government consultation and assistance.

We do not feel that we should attempt to deal with matters of financing, marketing, or production. Instead, we feel merely that we should present the very serious problem confronting the Pictou County area, and that this problem should be considered within the general framework of recommended solutions. Certainly, if this solution is to serve a social objective, then the Pictou County area would require to be given particular attention.

We could not present this matter fairly or properly without mentioning that one of the possible complications to coal mining expansion in this area is the matter of leaseholdings. All of the major leases have been acquired by Dosco, and the Company has steadfastly refused to commit itself to any new developments within the foreseeable future.

Remedial action in respect to this factor has been suggested to the Government of Nova Scotia at various times, and no doubt has received active consideration by the Government. We would restrict our comment on this point to enunciating that no policy which would place an obstacle to immediate expansion would be in the area of public interest,

Whether this should be in the nature of maintaining unnatural concessions or in the price field in respect to possible lease transfers.

It has been pointed out that there has been some historical precedent established in respect to leaseholdings more than one hundred years ago when a Committee of the House of Assembly made definite recommendations. These recommendations were made when it was felt that leaseholdings at that time were not being managed in a manner which contributed to public interest. Although no publicity in respect to the action of this Committee of the House has been given during the last half century, it might be constructive if the Inquiry were to obtain full information on this matter before the work of the Inquiry is to be concluded.

Our Federation has submitted to various levels of government consistently that a Federal - Provincial - Municipal Commission should be set up to inquire on a continuing basis into the future of the industry in the Pictou County area. We feel that such a Commission should undertake thorough and exhaustive investigations into all aspects of the matter. Information should be extended and compiled and consolidated. Definite recommendations concerning the possible future, if any, of the industry, could then be brought forth, and these recommendations should extend to policies by which any possible future for the industry might be realized in fact.

It is our belief that if there is a physical possibility for a future for coal in Pictou County, then this should be realized within the framework of a planned and co-ordinated programme to reconstitute the industry in the province. But we believe that necessary facts which are required to support mature considerations have either not been brought to light or have not been consolidated. We believe steps to eliminate confusion should be taken without delay.

In addition to the general position which we have stated early in our submission, we would submit that a programme to expand employment in the coal industry in the Pictou County area would have to be based on acceptance of the following:

- (1) A short term programme to provide immediate employment relief by providing one or more medium sized operations in either the Three Fifty

Section of the Foord Seam, or other seams of the Stellarton Series.

(2) A long term programme for the industry in the area based on exhaustive Commission findings in respect to the Main Seam, the Westville Series, and other coal measures about which sufficient information is not presently known.

It will no doubt be evident that we have not touched upon certain basic elements which will have to be considered by all of those interested in this Inquiry. Because marketing, management, economic and other such basic considerations have no doubt already been presented, or will be presented by more immediately interested parties, our Federation feels constrained to restrict the possibility of repetition in these matters. We would do that by leaving such suggestions and submissions to be made by more immediately interested parties.

In closing, Mr. Commissioner, we would like to reiterate the sentiments expressed earlier in this brief; and place great emphasis on our contention that this is a serious social problem. A problem which if left unsolved or half solved, could mean the elimination of long and well established communities; and placing of an unbearable burden on those effected by the decision. We submit that the thousands of people effected by the threat of unemployment and its attendant evils, are worthy of the most serious considerations; and those people are looking to this Inquiry for a solution.

The Nova Scotia Federation of Labour would take this opportunity of expressing our appreciation of having been extended the courtesy of this hearing, and to reiterate that the recommendations of this Inquiry could well serve to point the way for the first giant step to be taken to assure all of us of a newer and better Nova Scotia. We pledge our co-operation to this end.

All of which is respectfully submitted,

Edward Johnston,

President N.S.F. of L.

